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CITY OF BOSTON: PARKS AND PLAYGROUND NEEDS AND SUPPLY  
(CONSERVATION COMMISSION AND BRA SPECIAL PROJECTS)



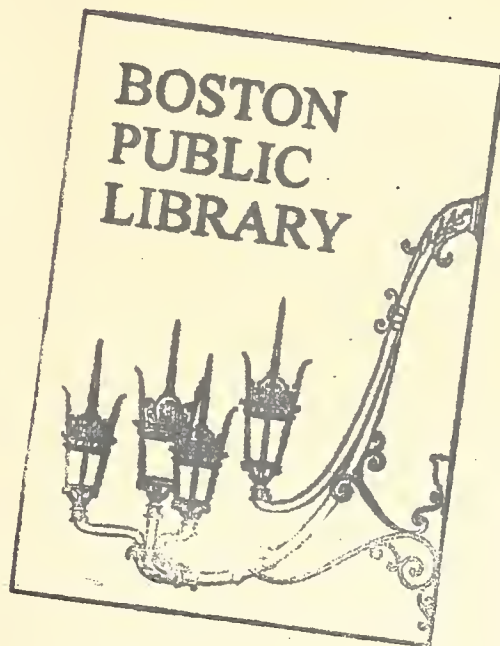
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PARK AND PLAYGROUND

NEEDS AND SUPPLY

IN MAINLAND BOSTON



A Special Statement Jointly  
Prepared by the  
Boston Conservation Commission

and the

Special Projects Division  
Planning Department  
Boston Redevelopment Authority

March, 1972



## INTRODUCTION

Need for public open spaces and recreation opportunities is steadily increasing with increasing leisure time and rising personal income. Everywhere open spaces are dwindling from the steady pressure of urban development. Lands which are still natural in character are scarce in Boston. Despite laws requiring legislative approval for the sale of parkland, many acres have been lost to parking lots, streets, utilities, schools and churches. One of the city's largest and most handsome parks has vanished into airport expansion.

In high density urban areas, there is need to provide both additional public open space and expanded recreation opportunities. In all neighborhoods, green spaces and water areas can provide contrast and relief from the urban environment. Local public recreation opportunities are most needed where limited income and limited mobility prevent families from traveling to more distant recreation areas and activities.

For Boston to meet the recreation needs of its residents, there is need to claim, or reclaim, for public use and enjoyment whatever areas within the city have open space or recreation potential.

The existing City park, playground and playfield acreage and also M.D.C. acreage are summarized in the table following. For each B.R.A. Planning District the 1970 population is given with the ratio of acres per 1000 residents.



1970 MAINLAND BOSTON OPEN SPACE ACRES AND POPULATION  
BY B.R.A. PLANNING DISTRICTS  
WITH ACREAGE RATIOS PER 1000 RESIDENTS

COB—City of Boston

MDC—Metropolitan District Commission

AREA	PARKS	PLAYGROUNDS	PLAYFIELDS	ACRE TOTALS	1970 POP.	RATIO
EAST BOSTON					38,873	
COB	2.39	18.83	25.98	47.20		1.25
MDC	46.50	-	-	46.50		1.25
Total	48.89	18.83	25.98	93.70		2.5
CHARLESTOWN					15,353	
COB	2.05	16.62	12.38	31.05		2.0
MDC	3.70	1.07	-	4.77		.4
Total	5.75	17.69	12.38	35.82		2.4
SOUTH BOSTON					38,488	
COB	18.66	15.07	57.0	100.73		2.6
MDC	89.40	-	-	89.40		2.2
Total	108.06	15.07	57.0	180.13		4.8
CENTRAL (Incl. North End, So. Cove)					19,344	
COB	74.64	6.55	-	81.19		4.2
MDC	-	-	-	-		-
Total	74.64	6.55	-	81.19		4.2
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL					27,538	
COB	10.83	1.17	-	12.0		0.5
MDC	54.10	-	-	54.10		1.9
Total	64.93	1.17	-	66.10		2.4
SOUTH END					22,680	
COB	8.08	13.48	-	21.56		0.95
MDC	-	-	-	-		-
Total	8.08	13.48	-	21.56		0.95
FENWAY/KENMORE					32,965	
COB	143.82	12.64	11.54	168.00		5.1
MDC	14.20	-	-	14.20		0.4
Total	158.02	12.64	11.54	182.20		5.5
ALLSTON/BRIGHTON					63,657	
COB	60.47	31.30	23.44	115.21		1.8
MDC	233.45	6.85	-	240.30		3.8
Total	293.92	38.15	23.44	355.51		5.6



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AREA	PARKS	PLAYGROUNDS	PLAYFIELDS	ACRE TOTALS	1970 POP.	RATIO
JAMAICA PLAIN/PARKER HILL					47,767	
COB	197.70	23.53	-	221.23		4.66
MDC	-	1.93	-	1.93		0.04
Total	197.70	25.46	-	223.16		4.70
WASHINGTON PARK/MODEL CITIES					71,095	
COB	425.92	60.46	14.00	500.38		7.00
MDC	89.00	-	-	89.00		1.30
Total	514.92	60.46	14.00	589.38		8.30
DORCHESTER					152,529	
COB	41.49	93.89	85.42	220.80		1.35
MDC	128.70	5.57	-	134.27		0.95
Total	170.19	99.46	85.42	355.07		2.30
ROSLINDALE					39,558	
COB	285.59	19.84	9.63	315.06		7.95
MDC	-	2.20	-	2.20		0.05
Total	285.59	22.04	9.63	317.26		8.00
WEST ROXBURY					34,989	
COB	.14	21.09	10.83	32.06		1.0
MDC	80.34	-	-	80.34		2.3
Total	80.48	21.09	10.83	112.40		3.3
HYDE PARK					34,977	
COB	158.50	23.65	13.03	195.18		5.5
MDC	536.87	11.10	-	547.97		15.7
Total	695.37	34.75	13.03	743.15		21.20
COB TOTAL				2,061.65		
MDC TOTAL				<u>1,304.98</u>		
MAINLAND BOSTON TOTALS	2,796.54	386.89	263.25	3,366.63	639,803	



## RESOURCES

There are basically four types of open space resources in mainland Boston:

1. Existing public open spaces

Municipal and State-owned parks and recreation areas, also special public spaces like the Arboretum. Also included are the M.D.C. holdings on the Neponset River and Dorchester Bay shoreline, and many small municipal sites in neighborhoods. A few sites owned as public open space are undeveloped or underdeveloped.

2. Land bypassed by private development

In Boston there are still places where because of site conditions, land is to date undeveloped. Such places include two former gravel quarries, some salt water and fresh water marshes and lands with steep slope or rough topography.

3. Land in estates and institutions

Considerable areas of undeveloped lands are associated with some mainland Boston educational and other institutions and hospitals. Some undeveloped land is also held in private estates - particularly in Jamaica Plain and Roslindale.

4. Developed land which may be reclaimed

Dumps, parking lots and other lands in marginal uses generally have lost their natural characteristics. They sometimes appear on the city tax foreclosed rosters. Some of them may prove to be reclaimable for park, recreation or neighborhood amenity.



## NEED FOR ADDITIONAL PUBLIC OPEN SPACE IN MAINLAND BOSTON

There is need for a great increase in public open space in mainland Boston. This assertion is supported by three current factors:

1. In mainland Boston in 1970 the city-wide average is less than 6 acres of open space per thousand residents. This is far short of the 10 acres per thousand residents recommended by the National Recreation Association and also by the Urban Land Institute.
2. Mainland Boston is visited daily by many tourists and at least 825,000 commuters, who come to work, shop, be entertained and take advantage of the numerous education, health, legal and financial resources in Boston. Incidentally they stroll through the Common, the Public Garden, Beacon Hill or the river front and harbor front parks and green spaces. All of these open spaces, especially the Common and Public Garden, are heavily used. They suffer gross erosion and littering. There is need in Boston for substantial additional open space acreage east of Massachusetts Avenue, where both commuters and tourists are concentrated.
3. Adult participation in outdoor recreation is projected to more than double by the year 2000.<sup>2</sup> This trend results from the rising standard of living being enjoyed by more people, both increased personal income and increased leisure time.

In each category of local open space - neighborhood parks, playgrounds and playfields - the City of Boston provides half or less of the open space recommended by national standards. Generally, those neighborhoods most lacking are the high density, inner core areas such as the North End, South End and South Cove.



Other parts of the city with more open space in relation to their population, have problems in the location of facilities and parts of their areas are unserved.

There is need also to increase the variety of recreational experience by adding acreage where the public of all ages can enjoy bicycling, hiking, picnicking, camping, boating and winter sports as well as the standard array of field sports.

Recreational development of the harbor islands by the Commonwealth will not only provide important additional acreage but also some of these opportunities, now almost non-existent. The Charles-to-Charles corridor in Jamaica Plain, Roslindale and West Roxbury will also provide variety.

## SUMMARY

Boston is low in all categories of municipal open space from neighborhood playgrounds to major parks. This is felt most keenly in high-population, low-income areas which require greater local public recreation opportunities.

To meet existing and future demand by Boston residents and visitors for recreation opportunities, a land acquisition program is needed.





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Park & playground needs & supply in mainland Boston. y

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